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Title: Rhetorical-performative analysis of the urban symbolic landscape: Populism in Action

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Introduction¹

Urban space expresses ideology through the transformation. Cultural geographers, in particular, have been accounting for capitalism and neoliberalism visible in the urban structures and symbolic landscapes (e.g. Berg 2011, Kolamo and Vuolteenaho 2013). Material surroundings in a city are in flux. They are often engrained with the dominant ideologies, shaped through politics, political economy and contestable ideals. But how to research the political established in the material? This chapter explores particularly the conscious efforts of transforming the cityscape focusing on nationalism and populist articulations in the cityscape. Exploring the city-text one can understand the workings of the hegemony in public space.

Discourse theoretical approaches often focus on text and writing. Yet for much of my academic career as a discourse theorist, I have been investigating the very material things such as the there discussed “city-text”, street names, statues and architecture in Budapest (e.g. Palonen 2008, 2013, 2015, 2017). Endorsing, preserving or protesting this urban symbolic landscape is hegemonic activity. This chapter demonstrates how these practices and material reality can be studied with discourse analytical framework of the Essex school. It also contributes to the methodological development of the approach through a rhetoric performative approach to discourse analysis.

The Hungarian capital, Budapest has been a concrete platform for making public political changes, debating and expressing the new era and ideologies through assessment of the past and generating a new the symbolic landscape. In Budapest, alongside other capitals of Eastern Europe, revolutions and sweeping changes have manifested in street names, symbols and architecture. Different periods of political rule are made visible in the city-text until they were eventually contested and transformed to symbolize the current reading of the past, present, and future. The early 1990s were important for contestation of the previous era and establishment of a new sense of nationhood and political community. Also political differences among powerholders were negotiated in reference to the quite

material political symbols and everyday surroundings. After 2010, when the Fidesz government took office after a landslide and claims of revolution, they also changed the street names and memorials. The Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has made his fame as a populist leader advocating illiberal democracy. This chapter explores the nationalist and populist meaning-making through the transformation of the cityscape and the city-text in Budapest.

Rhetorical performative basis of discourse analysis

To explore populism in the cityscape, this chapter develops rhetorical-performative discourse analysis based on Ernesto Laclau's poststructuralist discourse theory, applied as the Essex school of discourse analysis since the 1980s. Using rhetoric approach to material phenomena sounds perhaps counterintuitive. Rhetoric is often seen as persuasive speech or arguments (Martin 2013; Finlayson 2007). While philosophers have discussed rhetoric and ontology, conceptual historians have sought to tie rhetoric to the context (Skinner 2002). Developing the method Turnbull (2017) turned to rhetoric to emphasized situatedness. Rhetoric, as understood here, deals with moves on discursive field with articulation: logics. Logics here refer to the way in which not all meaning making is fully conscious or actor derived. One meaning-making process may have consequences elsewhere, as the logics tell. It adds another research to the logics approach (Glynos and Howarth 2007) and the systematized postfoundational discourse analysis (Marttila 2015). Rhetoric features in Laclau's work from the start (DeLuca 1999, Finlayson 2007). The rhetoric-performative approach we applied in the study of populism in Finland (Palonen & Saresma 2017).

Laclau's (2014) emphasis on rhetoric follows Paul de Man (1978) and focuses on tropology rather than persuasion. Nevertheless, political meaning-making is embedded with affective ties just as persuasive rhetoric. The emphasis on affects, resonated with revolutions (Laclau 1990) more than genealogy of hegemony (Laclau and Mouffe 1985), and was explored through psychoanalytical thinking especially after encounters with Slavoj Žižek in the 1990s (Butler, Laclau, Žižek 2000). Butler's work resonates with the idea that meaning-making processes are not mere speech or writing, but their performative character makes them constitutive. Constituting difference, constituting the abstract "us" in the space of heterogeneity, is the role of rhetoric. In his insistence that 'there is only politics where there are frontiers' (Laclau 1990, 160) affective investment in this dichotomy between 'us' and 'them', as moves in political meaning-making.

From this perspective, rhetoric is not simply about persuasion: it is about topology, logics. This fits an active conception of politics that Laclau and Mouffe articulate in contrast to political system or politics sphere (for this dichotomy, see politics-as-activity Kari Palonen 2006). In contrast to mainstream political science and its perspectives to liberal democracy, this approach sees politics as the articulation of points of identification and political demands, rather than as representations of existing interests or identities. The theory of hegemony that Laclau and Mouffe (1985) as well as Stuart Hall (1986, 1993) in Cultural Studies and Doreen Massey (2005) in Cultural Geography developed is a theory of political meaning making. Hegemony for Laclau was both about the sedimentation of particular meanings and about contestation of those. It was not a mere state of affairs. This dynamic view of politics drawing on Gramsci that set it apart from the more traditional Marxists that looked at systems and economy as distinct from politics. Drawing from Althusser the theorists of hegemony focus on identification. Generation of points of identification is central part of discourse theory. Following poststructuralism, these are relational, gaining their meaning through their connections. These may appear as static positions in drawings Laclau (2005), but actually they are dynamics.

Articulation is a key concept for discourse theory and closely tied to rhetoric (DeLuca 1999) and ideology and discourse. “In a world without foundations, without a transcendental signified, without given meanings, the concept of articulation is a means to understanding the struggle to fix meaning and define reality temporarily”, Kevin DeLuca (1999, 334) writes inspired by Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) work, which for him “suggest a rhetoricized ontology for a postmodern world and shows how such an orientation can be used to understand contemporary politics, particularly the new social movements.” This is the basis for this study here, even though the focus is not on the traditional “new social movements”, but political parties and groups, whether enacting policy or calling for revolution, and other groups of people seeking to articulate their vision for the future through transforming their surroundings. For Laclau and Mouffe (1985) articulation is a practice and hence it is not simply about speech or writing – but speech and writing also have a meaning-conveying or transforming function.

In this chapter exploring the transformations of the urban symbolic landscape I will demonstrate how these rhetorical-performative logics operate. Performativity is part of Doreen Massey’s (2005) argument the public (or people) and space being co-constitutive through antagonism. Marchart (2014, 279) has recently addressed this constructively a debate between the one-time neighbours from London, Massey and Laclau’s entangled theories (see Howarth 1996, Dikeç 2005) arguing: ‘Space is constantly “on the move”, every topography is constantly done and undone, just as Massey claims.’

For Marchart (2014) antagonism is the key for both theorists: space and time, social and political are not distinct, and analytical work is needed for untangling them.

If discourse theory of space is taken seriously, any given topography starts to appear in a particular light, and one will have to study the contingent, historical, and power-based moments of its original institution. What is more, our view will shift towards the dislocatory struggles that are taking place constantly around the shaping and reshaping of the social. In this sense, the category of antagonism – as it presents itself in the two modes of the social and the political [and space and time] – may prove to be as much of philosophical as of analytical value. (Marchart 2014, 280)

Key terms of rhetorical-performative discourse analysis

The rhetorical moves have particular logics. The logics approach (Glynos & Howarth 2007) named three types of logics, social political and fantasmatic. Yet, each categories Laclau developed also entails logics with different characters. Two logics beyond all, the *logics of equivalence and difference*, are central to the theory of hegemony. The logics also appear as counterintuitive or paradoxical: While the logic of equivalence denotes the equal position in a signifying chain, they also highlight the distinctiveness of each item, group or demand. While the logic of difference highlights the distinction from the other that works as a constitutive outside, it also conceals variation among all the groups against or demands contrasted to this other. In short, while the logic of equivalence brings out variation among the “us”, the logic of difference conceals this in the name of the greater distinction. The *empty signifier’s* logic is in the way in which a common denominator rhetorically or discursively produced, emerges over the others, generating a precarious sense of unity among the heterogeneous items or groups associated with it. The *floating signifier’s* logic relies on the contestation taking place over the demand or concept when attached to competing discursive chains, or forms of references.

Moving on to rhetoric, central for Laclau is *synecdoche*: the trope referring to a part representing the whole. Sometimes the effects of this can also be covered with the trope of *catathresis* when whatever takes the place of unity also transforms itself radically so the constellation would be something new altogether, the meaning or the name transform. Catathresis implies for Laclau, “naming the unnameable” and a rupture on a signifying field, an empty signifier, a new term emerging on the field. The unnameable or hitherto “unnamed” could include the dislocatory consequences and affective ties

implied by Laclau. For the floating signifier, there is no direct reference in Laclau's tropological toolbox, but with the help of the intellectual historian Quentin Skinner's (2002) readings renaissance rhetoric we can trace "paradiastole": changing the normative (ideological) value, refers to contestation between two signifying chains. Political frontiers are produced through paradiastolic moves (floating signifier), and meaning-making processes where the operation of logics of equivalence and difference take place.

In *New Reflections on the Revolutions of Our Time* (Laclau 1990) introduced two under-developed notions that feature in his work "myth" and "imaginary", these are central to meaning making and hegemony. We are not together because we *are* the same but because we think we share something beyond a single discourse "myths" and in this sharing we are equal (logic of difference). Imaginary is sedimented myth that generates the horizon of a social space. The key logics outlined here will be used in this chapter to explore the very material side of populist meaning-making in Hungary, where political discourses are heavily burdened on symbols and debates that generate dichotomies particularly. There political "us" and "them" easily turn cultural.

Populism and nationalism in urban symbolic landscape

Even though nationalists endeavor to reify the nation and present it as natural, nationalism is a profoundly political construct. As Benedict Anderson (2006) argues, nations have to be articulated and imagined to exist. Anderson's theory also follows the active process of identification that relies on myths as points of identification. Anthony D. Smith (1991) outlines typical points for nationalism. Contestation of everyday public symbols and commemorative sites (Azaryahu 1986) makes visible and tangible debates over national identity between the people and the current powerholders (Gillis 1994). Identification through symbols is crucial to that process, whether we identify ourselves with or in contrast to them. Rather than being primordial, a nation's character is symbolized and made tangible in political articulation, particularly through commemorative sites. Nations as if pre-exist, but a connection is generated, following Anderson. It also needs to be maintained. Michael Billig (1995) has shown this in his writings about "flagging" in "banal nationalism" he theorised.

Populism and nationalism differ in the way in which populism draws from disconnected demands and nationalism represents supposedly already existing characteristics. Rhetoric has a constitutive role (Laclau 2014): for both nationalism and populism. Populism is constitutive in a different way: it does not rely on the prior myths but generates us through a slogan or demand, and an opposition to

the other. Populism is a logic of articulation (Laclau 2005) and intervenes in political space simplifying it through logics of equivalence and difference to two camps, the people and the elite. Nationalism does not generate a rupture: it has no such a catachrestical force unless it is used in the situation of crisis where something impedes the full articulation of the nation and the national identification is sought for anew. In these cases of war or xenophobic nationalism seeks to reinstate this connection, which however is not seen as new but eternal tie. For populist articulations anything could be the demand or slogan that would represent the people and signify the otherness. As Laclau (2005b) wrote, naming processes generates affective ties, whereby finding common labels, names, and categories is central to populism. Quite literally: for the populists, urban transformations provide a tool for generating affect but also drawing these discursive political frontiers and points of identification. Populism works as an explanatory logic as an emerging imaginary guiding the direction of these changes.

Symbolic landscapes can be seen as tools for writing a common past. “There are few spaces as ordinary and mundane, yet politically charged as a city’s streets”, Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu (2017, 1) argue. Many theorists of nationalism pay attention to these processes which they regard as central to nation-building. Symbolic landscape includes architecture and memorials, but also street names. Transformations of urban infrastructure and street furniture, public buildings and their architectural forms convey meanings and constitute space. Equally commemorative elements such as statues and memorials add layers of meaning. Naming streets is a particularly (cost) effective tool for politics (Palonen 2008; 2014). Smith (1990, 1992) argues that we actively cultivate distinctive pasts in response to new crises and despite our multi-level identities. The symbolic landscape changes as we choose to celebrate particular national pasts or a set of heroes. This includes a political vision through the articulation of us and them.

Hungarian politics and performing frontiers

The reworking on the city-text in Hungary as a social logic, a sedimented practice: even when calls for revolution in Hungary have been framed within national tradition, rather than constituting a real radical break (Glynos & Howarth 2007; Palonen 2011). Political differentiation has been strong in Hungarian politics where the use of the past is a regular tool for the rhetoricians and policy-making related to built environment also is very much historically oriented (e.g. Nyssönen 1999). In Hungarian politics, commemoration of chosen pasts and visions for the future became tangible in the

urban forms. It demonstrates the centrality of the urban political symbols and the city-text for the making of populist claims through the re-articulation of an officially celebrated vision of the nation.

Hungary claims state traditions to year 1000: in the dominant narrative it is a fortress of Christianity and indeed wars against the Ottoman empire were fought on Hungarian territory. While much of the country was occupied, the rest joined the Habsburg empire, which in 1848-49 Hungarians fought for their independence. They gained autonomy as Hungarian kingdom, which as the empire was dismantled after WWI lost two thirds of its territory, as nation-states of Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia and others were formed. This many saw as grave injustice and in the name of irredentism these lost territories were sought back symbolically and through white terror, and partly as a response to the short-lived Soviet republic of Hungary in 1919. After WWII, Hungary became part of the Soviet-led bloc, the failed revolution of 1956, an attempt by Imre Nagy and his government to offer new perspective to Western Marxism. Soviet troops crushed the uprising, a pro-Soviet government installed brought a shift to 'goulash communism' that entailed more consumerism and economic freedoms: tourism industry brought foreign capital and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provided loans. Dissidents were mobilizing and gaining more voice in the 1980s with underground journals, or *samizdats*. The ruling party began relaxing their rule from the mid-1980s. Round-table negotiations took place in 1989 that eventually led to the dissolution the communist government.

The urban symbols were officially tied to the articulation or performing of a new identity and era was through new heroes and vocabularies, often accompanied by new forms of architecture. The 1989 revolution was symbolised in the toppling of communist-era statues and the reburial of Hungarian communist leader Imre Nagy. In the early 1990s, the change of memorials and street names was evident on multiple scales. Communist memorials were toppled and relocated from the central squares of the capital city to a remote village outside the borders of the municipality of Budapest. Private citizens established memorials to commemorate their victims of the 1956. New era was also symbolised by the new coat of arms of the Republic of Hungary and in the debates over new national holidays. The multi-party system gradually evolved towards a two-party system in the hands of the politicians and parties that prioritized identity politics, instead of policy debates. Extreme political polarization and politicization of the everyday lives has been typical of Hungarian politics since the late 1990s (Palonen 2009). Even the above-mentioned memory of 1956 (Nyyssönen 1999) was politicised and polarized and the empty signifier Nagy was turned into a floating one in a paradiastolic move: seen as the hero of the left rather than a national hero. The political polarization or 'competing populism' as bipolar confrontation between the so-called left and the so-called right, mainly the

Socialist Party and Fidesz, led to the situation where internal debate was considered weakness potentially leading to the decline of the party (Palonen 2009).

Performing polarisation

Populism is a logic of articulation that stresses the discursive political frontier, in this case, the political strategy of the ruling Fidesz government was to instigate controversy. Recent urban transformations in Budapest show a connection between populism and nationalism in the cityscape. We are not only witnessing celebration or “grafting” of nationhood in the way Smith (1990, 1992) described it but also an articulation of a people in the way that Laclau insisted: finding common means of identification and crucially generating political frontiers to define what the people are not. Next I will discuss exactly how Fidesz sought to constitute the people through dichotomies but also often borrowing from the nation-builders’ nodal points.

The first Orbán government led by Fidesz in 1998–2002 introduced, the Széchenyi Program, named after a reformer from the 19th century, renovating of urban centres around Hungary in Fidesz-leaning towns (Palonen 2013). In the cityscape in Budapest then governed by a liberal mayor and a left-leaning city-council, new spaces were created featuring frontier-drawing effects to the surroundings. Novelties from this first Fidesz era include bringing in the Hungarian countryside to the city, in the case of post-Fordist “*Millenáris*” Park; arresting the flow of the UNESCO protected boulevard with Terror House Museum’s iron header; or, the new national theatre generated a new node to the city with regionalist organic architecture stopping the building of an earlier accepted modernist building in the centre (c.f. Palonen 2013). Each of these included paradiastolic redescrptions of sorts: transforming the modernist glass-cube national theatre in the centre to a round historicist-regionalist one celebrating the national heroes in a new underbuilt area in the South Danube; Generating the landscape of floods that are typical for the Danube plains but are blocked off successfully in the capital city, in the *Millenáris*; and rewriting history through short-cuts that generate a chain of equivalence between the Nazi Arrow Cross movement, the Communist Secret Police and the Socialist Party. These landmarks highlighted myths that sought to sediment the confrontational imaginary and victory of those who claimed they were the only legitimate holders of national power.

The party leader Victor Orbán manifested the bipolar confrontation through symbols in the early 2000s. In Hungary people wore a traditional badge in their overcoats around March 15 to remember the ill-fated revolution of 1848–49. Just before the elections in 2002, Orbán called them to take off

this badge, *kokárdá*, from their overcoats when going to vote. By this change of practice in the symbolic space he sought to claim the nationhood and the revolutionary tradition for his party. In this constitutive articulation the logic of difference separated who are not wearing the national symbol from those who did and named those who did as Fidesz supporters irrespective of different political forces taking part in the elections. There were two large and two small parties that made it to the parliament in 2002. The other large party at the time, the Socialist Party emerged victorious in these elections and they also won the subsequent elections by a narrow margin. The crisis shifted decisively when the Hungarian PM Ferencs Gyurcsány admitted in 2006 to his own party to have “lied night and day” about the national budget deficit prior to the elections. The truth now severely undercut the party, it confirmed the suspicion that politicians lie and broke the imaginary of post-communist democracy. Riots ensued after the speech was leaked, rubber bullets were fired into crowds, and the opposition profited from the ensuing turmoil and public backlash (Palonen 2012).

Populist transformations after 2010

The confrontation escalated. Claiming the election hype for himself in 2010, Orbán as opposition leader, called for a “revolution in the polls”. Afterwards with two-thirds majority Fidesz started implementing changes. The Orbán government in 2010-2014 was a populist one (Bátory 2016). Media and electoral laws were changed in Hungary. They have been “populists-in-government who treat existing foundational laws as obstacles to the ‘real’ rule of the people” (Bátory 2016, 284), and reformed the constitution, media, and electoral laws to suit their objective of remaining in power. However also street names were changed in the early 2010s to mark the “revolution” – significant political change in Hungary must be performed through the city-text. The opposition was in ruins. After winning elections in 2014 “Viktor Orbán described himself as the leader of ‘the most unified nation’ in Europe” (Akçalı and Korkut 2016, 72). He called for constitutional changes to promote “illiberal democracy.” New era and imaginary was sedimented by a practice of myth replacement.

Large development projects have dominated Hungarian planning discourse, from historical monuments to soccer stadiums, “presented to the public opinion as prestige projects to emphasize national prosperity and cultural superiority as well as symbols of governmental care for those affected by the maneuvers of international actors” (Polyák 2015, 46). The surroundings of the parliament were transformed, previous order being the enemy. Three examples below account for the transformation.

Meaning was made through synecdoche (part representing the whole), paradiastole (transforming the normative-ideological value), and catachresis through new symbols for a new era.

Street Name Changes

Main changes in street names in Budapest took place in the early 1990s as signs of revolution of 1989 and the transition from communism to liberal democracy. After 2010 changing the linguistic landscape was a way in which power could be demonstrated and a new era marked across Hungary. Following legislation authorizing changing names tied to past dictatorships, the Academy of Sciences issued a list of names and personalities ‘referring to the socialist dictatorship.’ The fiercely debated also addressed the reality that street names were not changed in many rural communities, where names efforts to replace Marx and Lenin street names had not been a priority. Budapest removed names that could refer to the old era. New names included themes of religion and populism in different understandings. The Square of the Republic was named after the Pope John Paul II, originally a Polish dissident. Roosevelt paved way for István Széchenyi, an 1849 revolutionary yet also a moderate reformer and officially commemorated as the ‘Greatest Hungarian.’

One of the most visible changes was public square known as *Moszkva tér* (Moscow Square) from 1951 to 2011. The name of this major transport junction was returned to honor the politician Kálmán Széll after the 60-year absence.² This figure became a new historical hero and nodal point for the regime: sedimented through government reform package. The 1950-60s surroundings of the square were renewed and showcased as a site for significant daily commuter traffic and a meeting point for locals from different backgrounds, from businessmen and administrators to day-laborers and the homeless (Bodnár 2000).³ On the other hand, resistance was not new to this square: older generations had been calling the square Kalef (referring to Széll) unofficially during the communist period.

The new lexicon that replaced the former vocabulary and personalities related to past dictatorships was heterogeneous: what was crucial was the act of wide-sweeping removal itself. The ruling party Fidesz, in the understanding of populism used here, is a prime example of a populist party as their discourse is based on generating a dichotomy between ‘us,’ the people, and those threatening or illegitimate, often the Left or ‘communism’ (c.f. Palonen 2009).

Parliament Square: Kossuth tér to Interwar

The square next to the Hungarian parliament known as *Kossuth tér* is a key public site for political demonstrations and a symbolic nexus of many conflicting political traditions (Dányi 2015).⁴ The square hosted some significant national memorials making it a symbolic square for popular protests and commemorations. It was also a node of transportation with a car park, tramline stations, and a metro station that provided access to the other side of the Danube. The panorama of the Danube river, centered on the neo-Gothic parliament building designed by Imre Steindl, was entered into the UNESCO registry in 1987. In 2010, Fidesz initially focused its efforts on revamping Kossuth tér as the “the nation’s main square” (*nemzet főtere*), regulating the space as a “democracy square” dedicated “for free expression of political views and accentuate the beauty of the House of Parliament, its monumentality, and its representation of the nation from multiple perspectives.”⁵ The transformation included an underground car park for the MPs and the employees of the National Parliament, improved traffic lights, decorative green areas and reflecting pool, a new exhibition center on parliamentarism at the Museum of National Assembly and on the building, a flagpole, and changes to the statues on the square. The facades of the ministries and museums around the square were also to be renovated. The overall intention of these renovations was to return to the square and surroundings to the pre-1944 era.

Memorials work as nodal points in meaning-making: statues can be replaced with ‘better’ aesthetic for the ideals of the political party in power. Here are three examples which work as the most significant nodal points articulating the direction of the change but most importantly for populism here: the confrontation and power of the government over symbolic space. The first controversial act on the square was the removal of the statue of the first president of the Republic of Hungary, Mihály Károlyi, in 2012. This deed had been an electoral promise of the radical-right Jobbik party, because Károlyi had signed the armistice with the Allied forces that ended World War I for Hungary. That ultimately led to the Treaty of Trianon which resulted in Hungary losing two-thirds of the lands that belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The statue of Károlyi from 1975 was by the ‘house sculptor’ of the transforming regime, Imre Varga represent heroes with a human face: a two-part heavy iron arch that connects to an elevated rather sad-looking, life-sized male figure.

The statue of Lajos Kossuth on the same square had first monumentality with a seemingly timid, downward gaze. This version damaged in WWII was replaced by a more engaging, bold-countenanced bronze statue in 1952: after all, his revolution had failed in 1849. In 2015, an exact copy of the former statue was unveiled with Kossuth now surrounded by a brotherhood of politicians rather than the six generic figures as in the pre-Soviet period memorial. More contested was the exact copy of the interwar memorial on the north side of the Parliament: the 17-meter István Tisza memorial

was originally erected in 1934. Tisza, the Prime Minister of Hungary from 1903 to 1905 and again 1913 to 1917, was a contradictory figure. The opposition protested. The Socialists refused to attend the unveiling of this memorial in 2014. On the south side of the square, there an underground memorial that portrays in graphic detail the tragedy that occurred of Soviet tanks opening fire on demonstrators on November 4, 1956, yet it does not explain what the failed revolution was about. That would have been the narrative of the Left, the opposition in Hungary, but the other is not differentiated here.

The square around the parliament became a site for projecting the government's political agenda: nostalgia of the interwar statism; the nation's flagpole with guards conveyed order and nationalism; space for people and bikes rather than cars reflected green ideals; interwar memorials symbolized conservative values and the rejection of the 1945-1989 era; and a national botanical landscape highlighted the importance of nature conservation, and Hungarian countryside. The removal and installation of statues and memorials provoked passionate debates among Hungarians, politicians and historians.

The German Occupation Memorial / Freedom Square: Szabadság tér

The neighboring *Szabadság tér* (Freedom Square) caused intense debate in the media and at the location. It was so fiercely contested that the opponents organized a counter memorial. The floating signifier – or paradiastolic move to follow rhetoric dealt with WWII. The erected on the Holocaust memorial year, the German Occupation Memorial gained protests that eventually spawned the grassroots movement *Eleven Emlékmű* (Living Memorial). The official memorial implied that the Hungarians had not played an active part in the Final Solution during the Holocaust – something difficult to absorb (Hirschberger, Kende & Weinstein 2016). The counter movement criticized this rhetorical move: “the government ordered the erection of a statue of German occupation of 1944 in the heart of Budapest, suggesting that all Hungarians had been victims of German Nazis” (Bozóki 2015, 24). In fact, the first anti-Semitic laws in Hungary were actually passed in the 1920s and the genocide intensified during the Arrow Cross-era at the end of World War II.⁶

The *Eleven Emlékmű* started as a flash mob on March 23, 2014 under the heading of ‘living memorial’ (‘my story’) that asked people from all ethnic backgrounds in Hungary to come and place some small commemorative items at the site to challenge the politicized historical narrative embodied by the memorial. The movement grew into a standing memorial, a regular event, and a Facebook group and later Facebook page, where people, many of whom had no background in political activism, protested

government policies. From the perspective of the government, which was building its identity through enemy rhetoric, it was perhaps convenient to have this active Budapest-based group of intellectuals. The living counter-memorial remains on the site. It also offers a point of contestation for at least those Hungarians familiar with the issue and works as a rallying point for the anti-government protests.

This chapter sought to reveal how practices of transforming the urban symbolic landscape are relevant as an object of study for discourse analysis. It also established the rhetoric-performative discourse analysis as an approach related to the Essex School discourse theory. Performative-constitutive meaning-making is central to populism as a logic of articulation. In Hungary, the dichotomy of us and them was sedimented through transformation and contestation of urban symbols. The myths of the previous eras were contested, removed and replaced. Budapest as the platform for the re-articulation of nationhood was redesigned under Orbán governments enforcing populist confrontation and offering new points of identification. The interwar period was chosen by the government to be celebrated next to the parliament and paradiastolically rearticulated through selective amnesia of the German Occupation Memorial that also became a point of contestation, only strengthening the populist logic of equivalence: confrontation that itself became the empty signifier of Fidesz populism.

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¹ This chapter's theme relates research since 1999, with the latest empirical findings discussed in Palonen (2017, 2018).

² Kálmán Széll (1843-1915) was Finance Minister 1875–78 and PM 1899–1903.

³ *Moszkva tér*, a Hungarian road movie directed by Ferenc Török, set a tone of a generation in 2001. A novel based on ethnographic research was written about the lives of Budapest's homeless (Pöcze 2014).

⁴ In the late 1990s, the now-removed eternal flame memorial commemorated victims of the 1956 uprising.

⁵ The parliament's resolution (61/2011, VII. 13) including the Imre Steindl Program (Akçalı and Korkut, 2015, 77).

⁶ The Arrow Cross Party controlled the Hungarian government from October 1944 to April 1945. The party had roots in the mid-1930s in the Hungarian parliament and was composed of Hungarian citizens.